

Wisconsin Association for Perinatal Care  
**NEWBORN WITHDRAWAL  
PROJECT**

### Withdrawal

- Babies usually begin to show signs of withdrawal anywhere from 2 to 7 days after birth.
- The time it takes for signs to appear may depend on the dose of methadone, other opiates or drugs the mother may be taking, and whether the mother is breastfeeding.

### Parents Feelings

- Many parents describe the time that their baby spends in withdrawal as an emotional roller coaster.
- The hospital staff understands this is a very stressful and emotional time. Take comfort in the knowledge that we all have the same goal-to help you and your baby through the withdrawal and to get your baby home as soon as possible.

### Helping Yourself

- You may need to have your medication dose adjusted after the baby's birth.
- Spend as much time as possible with your infant during this time.
- Find out about other services available to help you.

### NAS Scoring System

- The NAS scoring system is used to assess the severity of a baby's withdrawal symptoms. When your baby is born the baby's health care provider will decide when and how often the scoring will be done.
- If the baby is scoring high on the withdrawal scale, you will be provided with suggestions on how to calm your baby.
- If the calming suggestions don't work, your baby's health care provider may start your baby on medications to decrease withdrawal symptoms.

### Important Resources

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
  - [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
- SAMHSA's National Helpline
  - 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
- 211 Wisconsin: Dial 2-1-1 for help finding resources in your local area
- Wisconsin Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Hotline 1-800-722-2295
  - Twenty-four hours/day, 7 days/week.
  - Provides information and help finding services in your area for women before, during, and after pregnancy and for children.
  - Call to find out if you are eligible for BadgerCare Plus, WIC, and many other programs.



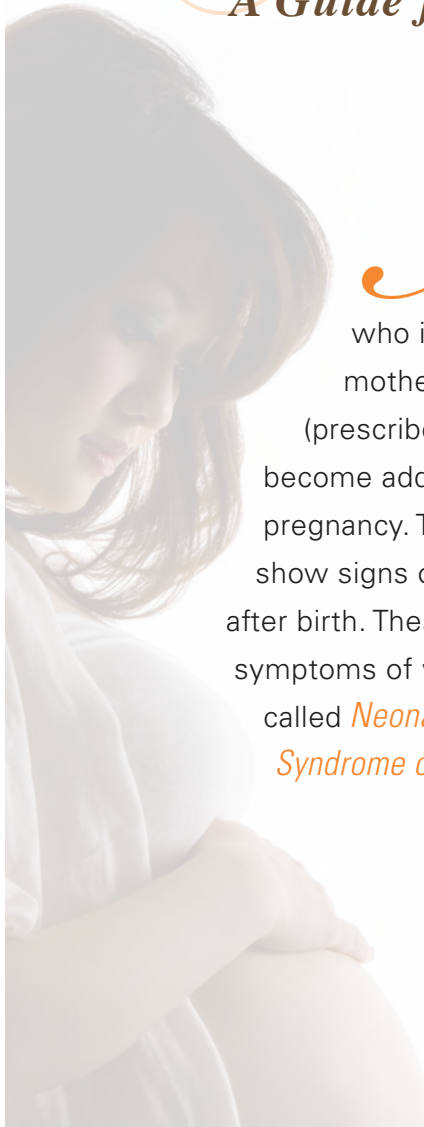
Wisconsin Association for  
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## Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) *A Guide for Parents*



*A* baby who is born to a mother taking drugs (prescribed or not) may become addicted during the pregnancy. The baby may show signs of withdrawal after birth. These signs and symptoms of withdrawal are called *Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome or NAS*.



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## Behavior of infants withdrawing from drugs and what you can do to help

BEHAVIOR	CALMING SUGGESTIONS
<i>Prolonged and/or high-pitched crying</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold baby close to your body</li> <li>• Decrease loud noises, bright lights, excessive handling</li> <li>• Humming, gentle rocking may help</li> </ul>
<i>Sleeplessness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce noise, bright lights, patting or touching baby too much</li> <li>• Soft, gentle music/rocking may help</li> <li>• Clean, dry diaper, watch closely for rash or skin irritation, treat as directed by your baby's health care provider</li> <li>• Feed baby on demand, frequent nursing</li> </ul>
<i>Excessive sucking of fists</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cover baby's hands with gloves or mittens if skin becomes damaged</li> <li>• Keep areas of damaged skin clean</li> <li>• Avoid lotions/creams as the baby may suck on them</li> </ul>
<i>Difficult or poor feeding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feed small amounts often</li> <li>• Feed in quiet, calm surroundings with minimal noise and disturbances</li> <li>• Allow time for rest between sucking</li> </ul>
<i>Sneezing, stuffy nose or breathing troubles</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep baby's nose and mouth clean</li> <li>• Avoid overdressing or wrapping baby too tightly in blankets</li> <li>• Feed the baby slowly, allowing for rest periods between feedings</li> <li>• Smaller, more frequent feedings may help</li> <li>• Keep baby in semi-sitting position, well supported and supervised</li> <li>• Always place the baby to sleep on his or her back</li> </ul>
<i>Spitting up or vomiting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burp the baby each time he or she stops sucking and after each feeding</li> <li>• Support the baby's cheeks and lower jaw to enhance sucking/swallowing efforts</li> <li>• Keep the baby clean and keep bedding free of vomit – the smell may increase irritability and irritate the baby's skin</li> </ul>
<i>Hyperactivity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep baby in a quiet room</li> <li>• Avoid excessive handling of baby</li> <li>• Avoid over wrapping baby</li> </ul>

## When calming suggestions don't work

- Your health care provider may give your baby medicine
- The kind of medicine and how much will depend on:
  - The NAS scores
  - Your baby's weight
  - The drugs your baby was exposed to during pregnancy. Make sure to tell your health care provider about all medicines or drugs you took in addition to methadone during your pregnancy.

## Weaning medications

- The process of adjusting your baby's medicine continues until your baby has stopped having signs of withdrawal
- Some babies may need to be hospitalized and on medication anywhere from 10 days to 2 months of life or more
- Each baby is different in how they respond

## When your baby goes home

- The symptoms of withdrawal may continue for up to 6 months. Symptoms gradually decrease over time
- Your baby may continue to have:
  - Difficulty with attachment during breastfeeding
  - Colic
  - Poor sleeping patterns
  - Slow weight gain
- Keep all appointments for your baby
- Get help from family/friends to care for baby if you need a break
- Use available community services
- Work with your provider as your dose may need to be adjusted